

Running head: PRODUCT EVALUATION – DREAMWEAVER MX

Product Evaluation – Dreamweaver MX 2004

Hand-On Training

Tim Boileau

Wayne State University

IT 7150

October 5, 2004

A summative evaluation was conducted on a software-training manual (print product) with accompanying CDROM. The title of the book is “Dreamweaver MX 2004 – Hands-On Training”. The CDROM contains exercise files and a set of movies to cover eight of the twenty lessons. Additional movies are available for purchase via an accompanying Web-site. The book is used with the IT7140, Interactive Courseware Design class. Based upon the evaluation, this product is appropriate for the audience, subject matter, and purpose.

The intended purpose of the product is to provide self-directed training to develop competencies using Dreamweaver. This training is taken concurrent with the course lectures for IT7140, which focus on developing and applying instructional design concepts using multi-media. The expectation is that the user will follow the steps in the book while gaining practice with the software while working on the computer. Research indicates that this results in a split attention effect causing increased cognitive load. The CDROM provides copies of the files referenced in the book, which build a case for creating a Web site for a fictitious company. Because the context of the training around the software is different than the focus of the class, the skills gained may not be directly transferable without direct intervention by the instructor to develop relevant examples.

A complete list of the criteria used to develop the evaluation is provided below. Each of the criteria will be addressed in a separate paragraph, with a summary and judgment provided at the end of this report.

1. Title, author, publisher, date of publication
2. Target population/ Audience
3. Purpose
4. Prerequisite skills, Front-end Analysis

5. Content/Materials
6. Instructional Design
7. Implementation
8. Cost

**1. Title, author, publisher, date of publication.** The title of the product is “Dreamweaver MX 2004 – Hands-On Training”, by Caro Green and Lynda Weinman (lynda.com), ISBN 0-321-20297-X. The publisher is Peachpit Press (www.peachpit.com). The copyright for the book is 2003.

**2. Target population/Audience.** There are potentially two audiences for the product. The primary audience, referenced above, is students enrolled in IT7140. These are graduate and post-graduate level students in the Instructional Technology program in the College of Education, at Wayne State University. As the product is available to the general population, the publisher has assigned a level of beginning to intermediate in terms of difficulty. As the tool is intended for hands-on learning, it makes liberal use of graphics (mostly screen shots) with a limited amount of text on each page. What text there is, is written at an eighth grade level.

**3. Purpose.** The principle purpose of the product for both audiences cited above, is to provide a tutorial for learning to use Dreamweaver MX 2004 by actually using the product to build a Web-site. For the primary audience, however, there are no direct examples using Dreamweaver to create interactive instructional content by IT7140 students. A separate software add-in module for Dreamweaver, called Course Builder, will be required to produce instructional content, which is not covered in this product. This should not be viewed as a

deficiency of the product, however, it is a shortcoming in its intended application.

**4. Prerequisite skills, Front-end Analysis.** The product is intended to teach skills using software to create software. Therefore, a minimum competency level in either Windows or Mac OS X applications, and operating system is a requirement. This includes the ability to create, copy, and name files and directories for whichever operating system the learner is using. Whilst IT6110 is a prerequisite for IT7140, there are no formal prerequisites for learning Dreamweaver, and no user characteristics provided with the product. It is not known whether the authors or their publisher conducted a front-end analysis prior to developing the product, as there is no information to support or refute this on their Web sites.

**5. Content/Materials.** In general the content covered in the product is comprehensive and logically organized. Each lesson builds upon the last, and the learner's focus is on using the tool, since the base files are provided on the CDROM. The book is very well laid out and the illustrations are easy to read. An inconsistency in the text, however, could prove to be problematic for Mac users. In the introduction section, the authors acknowledge the minor differences in the Dreamweaver interface, depending on the learner's operating system and promise to call out specific instances of different screens as they appear. Unfortunately, this convention is not followed on a consistent basis, causing some confusion when the screens on the computer did not match those in the book.

**6. Instructional Design.** The product is meant to be used by having the book open next to the computer, working directly in the Dreamweaver software

with the files included on the CDROM. From an instructional design perspective, it is difficult to learn when you are constantly switching between the diagrams in the book and the images displayed on the computer, due to increased cognitive load. Put another way, even though the learner is following directions and completing the steps, there is very little transfer of knowledge taking place.

**7. Implementation.** IT7140 students are instructed to work through the lessons during the lab time provided in class. For students that take advantage of this, there is potential benefit by working together with other students and being able to ask for assistance from the instructor. This can work to enhance the learning and to provide a context for the skills that might be missed by working alone and in isolation.

**8. Cost.** The list price of the product is \$44.95, and it is available through all major booksellers. This is competitive with other self-directed training and software reference manuals. The movies and other support information provided on the CDROM are a bonus and they are talked about in the book, to help get the most out of it.

To summarize the findings in the evaluation, the major strengths of the product are in the professional design and layout of the text, and integration with the support materials provided on the CDROM. The learner controls the pacing and sequence of material since there are base files for each lesson. This product should be viewed as a primer for someone wishing to learn Dreamweaver, as it is unlikely that the learner will become proficient in the software simply by working through the exercises given in the book and on the CDROM. As a result, knowledge transfer and proficiency gains will only occur with practice and problem solving as students work to meet the course objectives

## Product Evaluation – Dreamweaver MX6

for IT7140. Additional tools or jobs aids may also be required. The product is appropriate for the intended audience and practice using the lessons can occur in or out of class. For these reasons, the product should be recommended as a supplemental text for students enrolled in IT7140.